

is or homes for years, whose real
who had money in the bank,
and buying spree. The goods were
not be supplied fast enough. But,
Korea, that market was reaching
war problems were beginning to
gression we would have to be
acing them tomorrow. The num-
we can stand is certainly finite.
upt in the winning of such wars.

CONGRATULATION SAVE US? Will
his so-called illusions when they
make better sense to admit our
to better it? There is no doubt
e chord in the American public
something he obviously cannot
upon war and war threatens
survival may depend upon devis-
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bar the way. The very dearth
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chorus of affirmationism that
intellectual agnosticism, the pre-
never harder to maintain. The
positive." Pangloss has been
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whistle in the dark. A good
be more "constructive" than

Miscellany

A NOTE ON ATROCITIES

Helen Mears

NOTHING BETTER ILLUSTRATES the moral schizophrenia of our society than the generally accepted notion of what constitutes a wartime "atrocities." We are constantly reminded that international conferences have labored to work out rules to govern the treatment of prisoners-of-war in order to protect captured soldiers from unnecessarily brutal treatment. Simultaneously techniques of warfare have been developed which make civilians the major victims of war, and whatever torture or horror these non-combatants must put up with are accepted as "necessary" aspects of total war. This means that by the old standards of today one's own fighting men, when captured by an enemy, are entitled to more humane treatment than are the enemy's women and children whose murder — by explosives, fire, or starvation — is not considered to be an atrocity when committed by "our side." This attitude, of course, is true for "both sides" in any conflict.

An illustration of our own moral schizophrenia was provided on page 3 of the *New York Times* for Aug. 21, 1950. There, virtually side by side, were two enlightening items: One was a speech by General MacArthur, denouncing the North Koreans for atrocities to prisoners-of-war and threatening dire punishments for the commanding officers who might be considered responsible; the other was a column by Hanson Baldwin (*The Times* military expert) explaining that our strategic bombing in Korea—by which we had destroyed whole industrial areas and killed numerous women and

children—was losing us friends among the Korean population.

These two items seem to spell out our predominant attitude toward atrocities. On the one hand, mistreatment of captured U. S. soldiers is considered to be a crime for which North Koreans could be brought to trial and punished. On the other hand, the slaughter of Korean women and children by our Strategic Bombing Command is criticized only on the grounds that it might prove to be unsound tactics, since it might arouse antagonism which would interfere with future political operations.

On October 22 of 1953, the U. S. Army released an 87-page extract from a report of its "Korean War Crimes Division" which, according to the *New York Times*, included the "grisly description of the fate of thousands of prisoners-of-war" illustrated by "fourteen pages of official photographs."

This U. S. report of North Korean and Chinese atrocities against "our side" may find a place on Asiatic bookshelves next to a similar picture-book published in Japan this past August. The Japanese volume consists of 146 pages of photographs of Tokyo taken after the mass bombing raids by the U. S. Strategic Bombing Command during World War II—scenes of ruin, piles of charred bodies, and similar horrors. That the Japanese consider these mass raids as "atrocities" is suggested by the captions: "Charred bodies of a young mother and her baby"; "In the repeated B-29 raids, 540,000 houses were burnt and 2,860,000 people lost their homes"; "The residential section of Tokyo was particularly vulnerable to incendiary bombs because

of the highly inflammable nature of the houses of wood and paper. A night's bombing left it wasteland."

An American, thumbing through this volume today would probably feel distress at the pictures, but would be unlikely to equate these civilian victims of U. S. mass-bombing with similar scenes in Korea today; and would certainly not equate the victims of U. S. mass-bombing, in either Japan or Korea, with the victims of either Japanese or Stalinist atrocities. Yet it is a fact, well-documented in our own press, that our techniques of waging total war in Korea (as formerly, in Japan) have subjected civilians to appalling cruelties, and have produced such total devastation (with slow death from disease and starvation so prevalent) that any attempt to isolate some particular act or acts as "atrocities" can serve only to dramatize the artificiality of such moral standards.

THIS IS THE MORE TRUE because of the fact that although some of the atrocities, charged against the North Koreans and Chinese enemy by the U. S. Army, were caused by deliberate brutality either to gain information, or to satisfy sadistic impulses — the majority (as reported) were caused by conditions of war over which the enemy had no control. According to the *New York Times* analysis of the Army report, the majority of the atrocities consisted of long marches to prisoner-of-war camps under terrible conditions; and neglect in prisoner-of-war camps including poor food, little or no medical attention, and "callous treatment" including beatings. Deaths caused by such conditions are of course atrocities when judged in human terms. But the term "atrocities" — when used in the official sense — is a "legal" term carrying with it the stigma of international condemnation, and the threat of legally administered punishment. A "legal" atrocity is a deliberate cruelty or injustice not necessitated by the exigencies of war; and if the reports in the U. S. press can be taken as evidence, these "death-marches" were not due to deliberate brutality. The prisoners-of-war were made to march because the enemy did not have transport; and the

conditions were terrible because the marches took place in a country overwhelmed by war, and at a time when the U. S. Strategic Bombing Command was blasting railroads, trading roads, and causing general chaos. Similarly the bad food and poor medical service in the POW camps seems, in general, not due to deliberate brutality or callousness, but to the fact that food was limited for everybody and medical supplies were scarce. Conditions for the enemy — soldiers and civilians alike — were, in general, as bad if not worse than those reported for POW. Given the fact of war the major crime of which the enemy was guilty was poverty. Under the actual conditions in Korea many of these deaths were as unavoidable as though these men had been shot down in combat.

The U. S. Army report on "Red" atrocities charged that 1,057 to 2,384 Americans died in "death marches." No American can face such a possibility without shock and bitterness. Such natural grief for our own dead, however, ought not to blind us to the fact that our way of fighting the war — by total destruction of all industry, along with cities, towns, and farming villages — caused casualties into the hundreds of thousands of civilians, and brought total destitution to virtually the entire surviving population of the country. Some of our correspondents have faithfully reported our uninhibited bombing operations, and not a few of them have condemned them, not only as avoidable, but as destructive of American ideological and political interests, not only in Korea but throughout Asia. So far, however, popular opinion, which rises to a fury at the report of a "Red atrocity" against an American soldier, has seemed totally indifferent to our own mass production atrocities against Korean civilians.

THE DESTRUCTION OF KOREA beggars description. Press accounts from American correspondents describe a nation whose industry, agriculture, communications, cities, towns and villages have been turned into rubble heaps. Millions of people are herded into makeshift refugee concentration camps, perpetually one jump ahead of literal starvation, and

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thousands die every day from hunger, exposure and disease. During 1953, in a series of articles reporting on conditions in Korea, Dr. Howard A. Rusk, medical expert for the *New York Times*, wrote that: "Four years of fighting have resulted in nearly 1,000,000 civilian casualties and complete destruction of nearly 500,000 homes. Other statistics are equally staggering — 9,000,000 displaced people, 100,000 orphans and 300,000 widows. Writing of the ROK capital, Seoul, Dr. Rusk described it as a city whose "pre-war population of 1,500,000" was reduced "to around 700,000"; with "all public utilities and industries . . . either obliterated or seriously damaged." . . . Smallpox, typhoid and typhus rates skyrocketed and thousands of persons froze or starved to death."

When a prisoner of war freezes or starves to death in a "death march" it is an "atrocity," and the U. S. Government presents a report to the UN and asks for public debate and condemnation. When civilians starve or freeze, camped out on the rubble of their bombed-out homes it is considered to be a deplorable but unavoidable condition of modern war. This is to say that whatever miseries we have caused, although we may deplore them, are accepted as having been "forced on us." Simultaneously we assume that miseries caused by the enemy prove his sadistic nature.

On August 30, Dr. Rusk wrote: "Each evening at dusk refugee mothers with their sick children still huddle quietly before the Maryknoll Sisters clinic in Pusan so they may be among 2,000 patients to be seen *the next day*. (Ital. added). The ROK Army hospitals are still crowded with 20,000 disabled men whose definitive care has been completed but who cannot be discharged as they have no place to go. There will be 8,000,000 Koreans, primarily in rural areas, who must rely on 'herb doctors' for their medical care as no trained physicians are available."

In view of such medical conditions all over Korea it is not necessary to assume a sadistic nature on the part of "the enemy" to account for their neglect of prisoners of war.

The Army's report on "Red atroci-

ties" is illustrated in the *New York Times* by a picture showing "civilian victims of North Koreans being removed from mass grave at Chonju." This shocking scene must be a commonplace in Korea, with civilian victims of both sides buried in "mass graves," and—if we can believe our own correspondents—lucky to be buried at all. For example, turn back to the *New York Times* of Jan. 19, 1951 and read the account of the "two million refugees, most of them hungry and cold, frantically seeking to escape from the narrowing war front . . . in the midst of such misery death is such an 'informal affair' that burials are not only performed without ceremony, but hundreds of bodies lie about unburied until the military authorities have to step in and take action if only to clear the way for unhampered military operations."

Under such conditions, how is it possible to assign responsibility for bodies dug out of mass graves?

THE PROBLEM OF WHAT CONSTITUTES an atrocity needs some popular discussion. The U. S. military regulations establish standards for the behavior of American troops and any individual who transgresses can be dealt with severely under military law. An individual American—outside of combat—who kills or mistreats a Korean is liable to arrest, trial and punishment. At the same time, however, our top military command increasingly steps up its terroristic methods of warfare which assume that any civilians who happen to get in the way of military operations are as "fair game" as the armed forces of the enemy. Anyone who will bother to go back through the files of the *New York Times* (to mention only one source) and read the accounts of our war-making by our own correspondents must conclude that the idea of total destruction of a nation not only does not disturb our high military command, but is accepted as legitimate war-making.

For example read the account of a paratrooper operation (published on Oct. 22, 1950): "The North Koreans at this small town were the most surprised Koreans seen yet. . . . As soon as the parachutes began to drop from the planes the farmers took off for their holes.

Civilian casualties were heavy. In the burning town there was much mourning. All through the night shots were fired at confused wandering white-garbed farmers."

Or this (March 24, 1951): "Earlier, fighters had blasted the thatched-roofed villages of the area, leaving little more than flames and slowly rising spirals of smoke to mark their locations."

Or this (Oct. 19, 1950): "The besieged capital of North Korea looks from the air like an empty citadel where death is king. It seems no longer to be a city at all. It is more like a blackened community of the dead, a charred ghost town from which all the living have fled before a sudden plague."

The terrible destruction in Korea is not, of course, wholly due to U. S. methods of waging war; the enemy also is, obviously, destructive. It is a fact, however, that, because of our terrible mechanized power, it is the U. S. which has been most responsible for the mass devastation. As a *Times* correspondent wrote on Feb. 21, 1951 "the Communists had left the homes and schools standing in retreat while UN troops, fighting with much more destructive tools, left only blackened spots, where towns once stood."

The question of why there has been so little popular opposition to this sort of warfare can be, at least partly, explained by the fact that most of us don't know anything about it. Although our correspondents faithfully report these consequences of our techniques of war-making these reports are buried, often under misleading headlines, while the atrocities of the enemy are thundered in provocative headlines, and blazing editorials and radio programs. It can be assumed that if Americans did realize what we have done in Korea the majority would condemn our war-making as an atrocity—not only against the Korean people—but against our own civilization, since it is obvious that we can not convince the Asian peoples that "our side" stands for humanistic principles by practising the exact reverse.

In view of the general and overwhelming misery and destruction in Korea, our official military charges directed against

enemy atrocities are bound to seem directed toward strategic rather than humanitarian ends. Our individual private grief and shock for our individual tortured and dead is human and real. But our official denunciation of the enemy's sadism (along with our editorial blasts and provocative headlines) seem less an expression of genuine concern for tortured human beings and more the expression of a desire to whip up popular support for a policy of revenge—a policy, that is, which can only lead to more such inevitable atrocities.

Finally, it might be argued that while terrorism is, so to speak, a built-in part of totalitarian regimes, it is not organically related to the structure of American society. The point is, however, that the waging of total war decisively influences the social structure and moral make-up of the countries involved. Acceptance of brutality as a necessary device to insure victory leads precisely to that moral callousness which is one of the distinguishing features of the totalitarian mind.

Public Pornography

THE POSTWAR FLOOD of pornography shows no sign of abating and, for once, it seems, the dim congressmen, stern churchmen, and stiff-jawed ladies are complaining about something real and reckonable.

It is not my intent to oppose Vice, from which I derive as much pleasure as most people, but to point out that it is not Virtue; and that, while it doubtless has an ineradicable place in the scheme of things entire, that place tends, in polite society, to be private.

Its recent invasion of the public domain is unmistakable. The most obvious sign is that the two-bit moralities "glorifying the American girl" which used to be confined to the newsstands around the tracks now overflow the back shelves of the racks in neighborhood drug and candy stores. Six years ago they could not be bought in a dry southern village, although they were imported from the nearby city to the barber shop, poolroom, and bar. Today they will be found on